

Thai-Chinese Interpretation Online Course Design: Identifying and Accommodating Learners' Needs

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Abstract: In order to design Thai-Chinese interpretation online course, a survey was launched to examine the Thai learner needs. The authors analyzed the results by descriptive statistics analysis. The survey result shows that the most important learner need is to gain and improve interpreting skills and strategies. For the “advance preparation of interpretation (prior topic-specific knowledge)”, the survey demonstrates that Thai learners prefer to learn more related to business, society and tourism, which are related to the respondents’ career background. For the teaching and learning approach, from the survey Thai learners prefer interactive teaching approach. The results indicate that the framework of Thai-Chinese online course will be break the interpreting process down into discrete interpreting related skills, the paradigm of Thai-Chinese interpreting online course is student-centered approach and the social constructivist framework. Learners’ interpreting capacities and skills are trained through interpreting exercises. Moodle can support learners interact with teachers and classmates online, encourage the learners self-directed learning.

Keywords: Interpreting training, learner needs, Thai-Chinese interpretation online course, course design

1. Introduction

“Interpreting is a form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language.” (Pöchhacker, 2016, p. 11). Interpreting is an ancient human practice. However, the origins of the profession of interpreting date back to less than a century ago. There are two main forms of interpretation, one is consecutive interpreting, another is simultaneous interpreting. Interpreting is a complex task, and training interpreters even more so. Most teaching models break the interpreting process down into discreet interpreting-related skills, such as listening, memorizing, note-taking, speaking, etc., and students are required to do one task at a time before attempting to combine and coordinate all of the skills in interpreting exercises properly (Annalisa, 2015; Carsten, 2015). ICT is the ideal pedagogical tool for interpreter training programs. In some countries, implementation of ICT in interpreting training programs is still in the exploration period, however ICT has met the learners’ needs and learning objectives. Secondly, to satisfy the market demand for large numbers of qualified interpreters of various languages, to ease the pressure of teachers’ shortage.

As for Thailand, because of China’s economics and political influence, more and more Thai universities have Chinese language bachelor study programs. Especially the “One Belt One Road” creates the increasing demands for qualified interpreters. Based on our investigation, we have found normally with the Chinese language bachelor study programs, the curriculum usually includes Thai-Chinese translation and interpretation course, one course including translation and interpretation training, but it mainly focuses on translation. The interpretation training usually requires an intensive coaching, and there is no interpretation course. Obviously, this still cannot meet the learners’ needs. And from the literature, we only found Prapai (2017) designed and launched “Introduction of Thai-Chinese Translation Online Course”, the findings are the learners’ efficiency, achievement and satisfaction are higher. However, this is good indication to design Thai-Chinese interpretation online course. While Thai-Chinese interpreter educators in China mainly focus on reforming teaching-learning

model in classroom(张倩霞, 2018); learners' learning barrier and the problems in interpreting training (黄迎丽, 2016), interpreting strategies and enhancement business interpreting skills (阳亚妮, 2017, p. 2).

For the rapid needs of Thai-Chinese interpreters, most of the Thai universities are facing similar problems: with less teachers and more students, no independent interpretation course, it is quite difficult to meet the learner's needs. To solve these problems, online course is a good option. However, there is no Thai- Chinese interpretation online course in Thailand. Since Covid-19 outbreak, more and more universities have shifted to online teaching all over the world, this is another reason that urge us to consider and design the Thai-Chinese interpretation online course.

In order to design Thai-Chinese interpretation online course to accommodate their learning needs, first we have to identify and analysis Thai leaners' needs. To analyze the learner needs is the starting point to determine a theoretical level and how a course should be designed. Any course should be set up based on the learners' needs and we should be "sensitive to our learners and their needs" (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020).

Therefore, the research questions as follows:

1. What are the interpreter learners' needs of online interpreting course?
2. What are the components of Thai-Chinese interpreting online course from learners' perspectives?
3. What are the indications of the survey results for mapping Thai-Chinese online course?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learner Needs

In order to design the Thai-Chinese interpretation online course to accommodate their learning needs, we have to identify and analysis the Thai leaners' needs. As Richards (Richards, 2001) states "a sound educational program should be based on an analysis of learner needs."

The needs of a learner represent the gap between what the learner wants to gain the learning experience and the learner's current state of knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm(Noessel, 2003).To analyze the learner needs is the starting point which is usually done before, during and after the course in order to determine a theoretical level and how a course should be designed, such as the course outline, materials and resources. Any course should be set up based on the learners' needs and we should be "sensitive to our learners and their needs" (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). Therefore, learner needs analysis can be seen as a process in curriculum development (Richards, 2001).

Learning needs, including numerous factors(Kaewpet, 2009):

- "The learners background, such as: who the learners are, their socio-cultural back ground, learning background, age, gender, background knowledge of specialized contents, background knowledge of second language"
- "Teaching and learning styles with which the learners are familiar"
- "Appropriate or effective teaching and learning methods"
- "Knowledge of specialized contents that teachers should have"
- "Suitable instructional materials and study location"
- "Time of study and status of courses"
- "Expectations about what learners should achieve in the courses"
- "How necessary the courses are for the learners"

2.2 Components of Interpreting Training Program

Interpreting is a complex process, and training interpreters even more so. Most teaching models break the interpreting process down into discreet interpreting-related skills, such as listening, memorizing, note-taking, speaking, etc., and students are required to do one task at a time before attempting to combine and coordinate all of the skills in interpreting exercises properly(Annalisa, 2015; Carsten, 2015). And each interpreter student has a different learning curve and his/her strong points and

weakness. Some students may need more practice than others. This means that interpreter training certainly requires an individual focus and the long hours of practice (Gile, 2009b).

There are 6 components as follows supposed to be considered in the interpreting training program (Yamada, 2019): (1) The interpretation theory: First was introduced by Seleskovitch and Lederer in 1984. Then later utilized to form a model of interpreting processes includes: listening, analysis, short-term memory, speech production, and process management (Gile, 2009a). (2) Working Memory: During the interpreting training, the learners store lexical-semantic knowledge associated with words in long-term memory can support information processing in working memory (Yudes et al., 2012). Interpretation requires working memory to perform varies, intrinsically and substantially (Christoffels et al., 2006). (3) Semantic Chunking Input: Semantic chunking input is the key to comprehension in semantic processing of interpreting. In interpretation, the segmentation supports information processing. During this process, the learners become more aware of translation units and be able to focus more closely on what is being said from the speaker, while simultaneously deliver the message from the speaker. (4) Source Language Presentation Rate: The source language presentation rate has a great effect on comprehension. The teachers have to consider the source language presentation rate in interpretation training. (5) Linguistic Complexity of the Source Speech: There are four parameters of linguistic difficulty: sentence density, syntactic complexity, the type of clause, and the type of subordination are related to interpretation accuracy (Hild, 2011). (6) Advance Preparation: Interpreting performance improves if the source speech is made available—prior topic-specific knowledge significantly aids text comprehension, processing, and related performance measures (Brunfaut & Révész, 2015).

2.3 ICT Integrated Interpreting Education

From a pedagogical perspective, since 1950s, most West authors in interpreting studies are involved in interpreter education. The interpreting researchers have studied the curricular issues, interpreter training include student selection and performance assessment as well as teaching methods for developing the skills that make up the interpreter's core competence (Pöhhacker, 2016, p. 177). In the mid-1990s, with the information and communication technology (ICT) development, ICT assisted interpreting training is a new field for interpreting education and research. The researchers have done many empirical researches in different culture context.

Intelligent ICT applications incorporate new utilities to increase interaction between computer and users and to situate learning in more realistic contexts (Sandrelli & Jerez, 2007). Tikhonova et al. (Tikhonova et al., 2015) reveals that ICT in teaching consecutive interpreting can create an educational environment supporting the development of professional competency of a consecutive interpreter by investigate 10 interpreting learners. Additionally, ICT makes learning more accessible, interesting and efficient.

Some researchers demonstrate the good practice of blended learning and online interpretation course. Learners can profit from the proper online interactive interpreting exercise (Tymczyńska, 2009). Learners were generally satisfied with their online learning experiences and positively evaluated the efficacy of online training. Online-based learning serves as an effective learning model which creates an interactive learning environment for students, cultivate students' autonomous learning efficiency and ability, and enables teachers to supervise and evaluate students' learning habits and effects during the whole process, which in return, it helps to improve the teaching design constantly (Chen, 2020).

Along with the MOOCs development, a European Commission-funded project producing -Online Resources for Conference Interpreter Training (ORCIT) was launched in 2010. ORCIT is a multilingual and interactive open access online resource (www.orchid.eu) which offers interactive pedagogical tools for conference interpreter training. It builds on the success of the UK government-funded National Network for Interpreting, bringing in partners from across the EU. The researchers have discussed the technological tools and platforms used, the workflow processes employed, and practices of ORCIT (Bordes & Muroiwa, 2015); media forms (Bordes & Muroiwa, 2015; Carsten, 2015); challenge of evaluation (Carsten et al., 2020).

While in China, there are 10 most influential MOOCs platforms that offer English-Chinese translation and interpreting courses. All of the courses are designed by the universities in China, e.g. Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Nanjing Normal University. Xu (Xu et al., 2020) tried to present the whole picture of the status quo, merits, existing problems and future development of translation and interpretation education on MOOCs. The authors analyzed 9 online courses on

icourse163.org. They investigated course requirements, course assessment and testing, teacher-student and student-student interactions, registration, teachers, learners' comments. They found that TI MOOCs, though vigorously promoted by education authorities at various levels, are still at their primary stage.

From the literature review, we deduce that:

First, ICT is the ideal pedagogical tool for interpreter training programs. In some countries, implementation of ICT in interpreting training programs is still in the exploration period, however ICT has met the learners' needs and learning objectives. Secondly, to satisfy the market demand for large numbers of qualified interpreters of various languages, to ease the pressure of teachers' shortage.

3. Research Design and Methodology

The objective of this research is to investigate and understand the interpreter learners' needs and perspectives of online course. Based on the results, the authors map the theoretical framework for Thai-Chinese interpreting online course to accommodate the learner needs for the further pedagogical practice and research.

The methodology is to construct a survey to investigate interpreter learners' learning needs. It is useful and helpful to conduct surveys before or at the beginning of the online course in which the learners might be at very different skill or experience levels (Davis, 2001). Learner needs is an approach to investigate the learner's information before a course starts (Jordan, 2007). Richterich & Chancerel (Richterich & Chancerel, 1977) recommend that learner needs analysis can be investigated through survey. Therefore, the authors conducted a survey for better understanding Thai learners' needs before designing Thai-Chinese interpretation online course. The survey is in Thai language, so there is no barrier for the participants to understand. The online survey was launched from December 2020 to January 2021. The survey includes 2 parts: the first part is the respondents' basic information; the second part is the learner needs, including interpretation learning contents, prior topic-specific knowledge, teaching method, learning expectations, learning hours and assessment.

The participants of this research are Thai who are interested in learning Chinese-Thai online interpretation courses. Participants are from mainly three groups: the Chinese as a second language graduates from Mae Fah Luang University (northern Thailand), Chulalongkorn University (central region) and members from Thai Translation Association. The three groups are well-known for Chinese-Thai interpretation Thailand labor market. The whole population of these three groups is 490, out of this, there was 120 complete responses from them (24.49%). The descriptive statistics analysis is applied in the data analysis.

4. Results

A total of 120 valid questionnaires are collected, which can basically represent the learners' needs and the perspectives of Thai-Chinese interpretation online course of the whole country.

4.1 Basic Information

Table 1. *Age of respondents*

Age Range	Percentage
20-30 years old	80%
31-40 years old	18.3%
41-50 years old	1.7%

Table 2. *Academic degree*

Academic degree	Percentage
Bachelor	76.7%
Master	17.5%
Ph.D.	5%
College	0.8%

Table 3. *Chinese as a foreign language proficiency*

HSK level	Percentage
Level 4	15 %
Level 5	51.7 %
Level 6	23.3 %
Have not taken any HSK test	10%

Table 4. *Career background*

Career background	Percentage
Employee of companies or state-owned enterprises	35.8%
Teacher	20.5%
Looking for a job	12.5%
University students	11.7%
Translator	10.8%
Other occupations hotel staff, tour guides, freelancers, businessmen, etc.	0.8%

There are 98 female respondents (81.7%), 21 males (17.5%), 1 third gender (0.8%). Among the 120 respondents, 80% (96 people) were 20 to 30 years old; followed by 31 to 40 years old, 22 people, accounting for 18.3%. There are only 2 people aged 41-50, accounting for 1.7%. From the respondents' education background, most respondents are bachelors. And most of them study major is Business Chinese. For Chinese as a foreign language proficiency, we adopt the HSK (an international standardized test of Chinese language proficiency) as an indicator. For designing the interpretation online course, learners' current language proficiency is supposed to be considered. From the result, it shows that most of the respondents' Chinese are proficient. It is a good point to start Thai-Chinese interpretation online course. There are variety of the participants range from different career background. The majority (35.8%) are employees who are not a translator or an interpreter, but they report that they may work related to translation in the future. The secondary is teachers (20.5%). There are also few students, and few translators participated the survey.

4.1 Learner needs

The second part is the learner needs, including interpretation learning contents, prior topic-specific knowledge, teaching method, learning expectations, learning hours and assessments. All the items are allowed participants to choose more than one answer. Therefore, percentage is based on the total number of the participants (N=120).

Table 5. *Interpretation learning contents*

Interpretation learning contents	Percentage
Oral and listening Training	77.5%
Skills and strategies	75.0%
Fluency training	75.0%
Long sentence processing	74.2%
Notes-taking	68.3%
Memory training	68.3%
Intercultural communicative competencies	65.0%
The translation of idioms	62.5%
Deal with interference factors;	60.8%
The process and steps of interpretation	58.3%
The standards of interpretation	42.5%
The roles and responsibilities of interpreter	30.8%
The status quo and development trend of interpreting work in Thailand	25.8%
The history of interpretation	22.5%

Table 6. *Prior topic-specific knowledge*

Prior topic-specific knowledge	Percentage
Tourism	63.0%
Society, culture	62.5%
Etiquette, reception of foreign guests	61.7%
Transportation, logistics	58.3%
International economics; trade and investment; Business negotiation	58.0%
Politics, diplomacy and international relationships	54.2%
Hotel Spa	52.1%
Education	50.8%
Entertainment, movie, documentary	50.0%
Industry	47.1%
Medical drugs, public health	44.2%
Mechanical engineering	42.9%

For interpretation learning contents items, the results show that the learners really want to learn oral and listening, interpreting skills and strategies, fluency training, long sentence processing, notes-taking, memory training. The history of interpretation is the lowest need of learning content (22.5%).

Table 6 shows that respondents' learning needs for advance preparation of interpretation that related to prior topic-specific knowledge. The top three learning needs are tourism, society, culture, etiquette, and foreign affairs. The large learning needs also include business aspects such as transportation and logistics, international economics, trade and investment, and business negotiations. Such survey results may be directly related to the background of the respondents. Most of the respondents have academic backgrounds majoring in Business Chinese, and most of them are employees of companies or state-owned enterprises. There is a high need for interpretation related to business content, while there is not such a high learning need for technical content such as machines and engineering.

Table 7. *Learning expectations (it allowed participants to choose more than one answer)*

<i>Learning expectations</i>	Percentage
To gain techniques to interpret well in Thai and Chinese, such as summary and notes-taking	83.3%
To gain memory skills, e.g. summary and note taking	73.3%
To learn interpretation in professional fields	70.8%
To gain knowledge, principles and practice	70%
To assess, criticize, give opinion to a translation or an interpretation	38.3%

From the learning expectations, respondents think each aspect of interpretation is important. Most want to gain techniques to interpret well in Chinese and Thai, to gain memory skills, to learn interpretation in professional fields, to gain knowledge, principles and practice. We also investigate the respondents' perspectives of teaching methods and assessment. The results are as follows:

Table 8. *Teaching method*

Teaching method	Percentage
Interpretation practice interactive teaching approach	74.2%
Simulated situation teaching approach	70%
Example of interpretation and role play teaching approach	61.7%

Interpretation case teaching approach	57.5%
Expository teaching approach	39.2%
Discussion	31.7%

Table 9. *Assessment*

Assessment	Percentage
Interpretation test, such as a certain segment of a movie, TV show or a speech	85.8%
Post-test of each leaning unit	75%
Multiple choice questions	38.3%
Summative test at the end of the course	20%
Test is not required	5%

Most of the respondents prefer the interpretation practice interactive teaching approach. They believe that interpretation capabilities are gained by more practice and training. However, many respondents still prefer to learn more practical interpreting strategies by watching example of interpretation. And most respondents think each leaning unit should have a post-test. They prefer the interpretation test, such as interpret a certain segment of a movie, TV show or a speech.

Table 10. *Learning hours of the whole course*

Learning hour	Percentage
30 hours	32.5%
40 hours	24.2%
More than 60 hours	18.3%
60 hours	11.7%
20 hours	7.5%

Table 11. *Teaching language and subtitle language*

Teaching language	Percentage
Thai	69.7%
Chinese	69.7%
English	12.6%
Provide teaching videos subtitle in both Thai and Chinese	70%
Provide teaching videos subtitle in English	12.5%

For the learning hours of the whole course, 32.5% respondents state 30 hours is more suitable, followed by 40 hours (24.2%). And from the survey, most Thai learners' Chinese proficiency are good, but they still prefer teaching language and videos subtitles in both Thai and Chinese.

5. Discussion and Mapping the Theoretical Framework for Thai-Chinese Interpreting Online Course

To answer research questions 1 and 2, the survey results show that the most important learner needs are to gain and improve interpreting skills and strategies. For the “advance preparation (prior topic-specific knowledge)”, the result demonstrates that Thai learners prefer to learn more related to business, society and tourism, because they are related to the respondents' career background. For the time of study, according to the survey results, the ideal learning hours are 30-40 hours. For the teaching and learning approach, Thai learners prefer interpretation practice interactive teaching approach, they declare that they can learn more practical interpreting strategies by watching example of interpretation. Most respondents think assessment is necessary for the course. And from the survey, most Thai learners' Chinese proficiency is good, but they still prefer teaching videos subtitles in both Thai and Chinese.

To answer research question 3, based on the respondents' feedback, we believe that in order to meet the learner needs, the interpretation online course should be more practical and professional. The course supposed to focus on improving learners' interpreting skills. And according to Annalisa(Annalisa, 2015) and Carsten(Carsten, 2015) mention, most interpreting teaching models

break the interpreting process down into discreet interpreting-related skills, such as listening, memorizing, notes-taking, speaking, etc.), and students are required to do one task at a time before attempting to combine and coordinate all of the skills in interpreting exercises properly. For the interpretation skill enhancement and the acquisition of relevant strategies and cognitive skills, interpreting exercises are universally considered the most efficient (Gile, 2005; Pöchhacker, 2016), therefore Thai-Chinese interpretation online course must focus on training and improving the learners' bilingual skills, analytical listening skills, memory retention skills, notes-taking skills and speaking skills through the interpreting exercises.

The survey results show that only 6.7% report that they had online learning before, however 114 (95%) respondents want to learn interpretation online course. Well-designed online learning produces strong learners' learning outcomes, it is also capable of incorporating opportunities for learners interact with instructors and fellow learners and express their views in online environments without being pressured by the immediate environment (Means et al., 2009). Integrating ICT into the interpretation course can help to train competent interpreters. The usefulness of ICT integrated in interpretation course are as follows: (1) to support acquisition of theoretical knowledge and principles of interpretation; (2) videos can provide real-life situations; (3) to show the best practices in interpreting; (4) to provide examples of interpreters' failures to analyze; (5) to provide a high quality audio and video material for interpreting practice; (6) to provide modern tools to support interpreting, such as online dictionaries, search engines and communication tools etc. It is concluded that ICT integration into the curriculum enables to support every stage of the interpreters learning process, to make it more efficient and to get better results (Stepanova, 2014). To pin point of ICT, online learning platform such as learning management system with different materials, self-paced and self-directed practice reduce the anxiety of interpreting students. It encourages interpreter learners' motivation more than in the traditional classroom (Hansen & Shlesinger, 2007).

According to the survey, Thai learners prefer interactive teaching approach, therefore the paradigm of Thai-Chinese online course is student-centered approach and the social constructivist framework with instructors acting as "organizers, advisers, and sources of information" (Horváth, 2007, p.104). The constructivism learning theory sees learning is an interactive, social-personal process (Kiraly, 2014; Rodríguez Melchor, 2017; Vygotsky, 2012). Since Kiraly (2014) claims that the capacity of interpreter and is socially-constructed and multi-faceted complex of skills and abilities, the social constructivist approach can be suited well to interpreter training (Kiraly, 2014; Tymczyńska, 2009; Xiangdong & Qi, 2018). "Moodle is designed to support a style of learning called Social Constructionist Pedagogy. This style of learning is interactive" (Rice & William, 2006, p.9). It is a free, open-source online course management system. It contains teaching-learning activities such as teaching videos, assignments, forum, glossary, quiz, and sharable content object reference model. In the online social constructivist learning environment, learners are expected to be able to control and self-direct their own learning. Moodle can support interpreter learners interact with teachers and classmates online, encourage interpreter learners self-directed learning (Rice & William, 2006; Tymczyńska, 2009). Therefore, teachers can consider design and set Thai-Chinese interpretation online course through Moodle platform.

Based on this research results, literature review and pedagogical practice, the structure of Thai-Chinese interpretation online course will break the interpreting process down into discrete interpreting related skills, here is addressed below:

Table 12. *Thai-Chinese interpretation online course structure*

Learning Unit	Learning Objects
1 Introduction of interpretation	1. Principles of interpretation; 2. Outline of the course
2 The listening skills of interpretation	1. Listening skills; 2. Listening strategies.
3 Information processing	Information processing skills
4 Memory training	Memory expansion skills
5 Note-taking	Note-taking skills
6 Strategies in target-language reproduction	Skills of interpreting delivery

The Thai-Chinese interpretation online course contains 6 main units, according to the survey results, the total learning hours are 40 hours. We will adopt Moodle to launch and manage the online course. Each unit includes 4 parts, the first part is the video about explaining interpreting principles. The videos of second part will include the practice of interpretation process, discussion between teacher and student. The third part is interpreting exercise. It will be a video about mock interpreting conference or other situations in Thai or Chinese to allow learners to practice interpreting. The teachers allow the learners to peer-review their interpreting exercises and discuss with the teachers, learners can gain profit from the proper online interactive interpreting exercise (Tymczyńska, 2009), learners are welcomed to post any discussion topic on Moodle, teachers and learners can discuss in this panel. The fourth part consists a quiz which tests learners' interpreting ability and skills in a given interpreting situation. Assessment should be meaningful, aligned with course objectives, student learning outcomes, and chosen methodology (Angelelli, 2006; Tymczyńska, 2009). Thus, continuous assessment methods based on online class participation and assignments.

And according to the survey results, for the advanced preparation (prior topic-specific knowledge), the teachers shall select interpreting learning and practicing materials that related to business, tourism, society and culture for each learning unit. It is important to select the proper materials for students to learn interpretation. Interpreting performance improves if the source speech is made available—prior topic-specific knowledge significantly aids text comprehension, processing, and related performance measures (Alexander et al., 1994; Brunfaut & Révész, 2015). Therefore, teachers should avoid source texts with strong foreign accents, proper names, and high delivery rates (Gile, 2009a) and select source texts that are highly intelligible and less syntactically complex.

To sum up, the research of Thai learner needs indicates that the framework of Thai-Chinese online course will be break the interpreting process down into discrete interpreting related skills, the paradigm of Thai-Chinese interpreting online course is student-centered approach and the social constructivist framework. Learners' interpreting capacities and skills are trained through interpreting exercises. Moodle as the online learning platform, support the learners self-direct and self-pace learning. And teachers play the role as organizer, supporter to help and encourage the learners to master the interpreting skills and strategies. So that, educators and educational organizers can adjust teaching methods, improve teaching models, optimize teaching contents, improve technical support for promoting the quality of interpretation education.

According to the needs of learners and the characteristics of online interpretation teaching, it is expected to design the Thai-Chinese interpretation teaching mode, improve the interpretation ability quickly, and to be a feature of the university. On this basis, it is expected to carry out the research on the interpretation mechanism between China and Thailand, for serving the cultural and social exchanges between China and Thailand, enhancing the discipline attribute of the course and enriching the discipline connotation of the university.

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